Chief Jean Baptiste Ducoigne
Essay by “Kaskaskia – Cahokia Trail” Facebook Page
February 3, 2021

Chief Jean Baptiste Ducoigne was born in 1750, to a French father and a Tamoroa Indian mother.

At the young age of 17 he was named the Chief of the Tamaroa Indian tribe. During his time as Chief, Ducoigne also played an active role in the Revolutionary War.

"He was very significant in the Revolutionary War," said Martha Emling, Regent, Beaucoup Creek Daughters of the Revolutionary War. “He made trips from the Illinois country to Virginia to meet with Thomas Jefferson and also to meet with General Marquis de Lafayette.”

His last name is of French origin with roots on his father's side and early traditional heritage attributable to that fact that Jean Baptiste Ducoigne was born Jan. 21, 1750, and was soon baptized at the Church of St. Anne outside of Fort de Chartes.

Ducoigne's mother was a Tamaroa Native American, however, and Ducoigne's life was dedicated to leading tribes of Native Americans in the area as he was eventually referred to for his accomplishments as Chief of the Kaskaskias.

"He was a Tamaroan who eventually settled along the Little Muddy River in the area. He was kind of a gypsy, but his celebrity status grew," said Publisher John Croessman of The Du Quoin Evening Call.

Ducoigne was made chief of the Tamaroas in 1767. It was the same year the Illinois Confederacy made up of the Kaskaskias, the Michigans, the Peorias, the Cahokias and the Tamaroas, dissolved when Native Americans from the Michigan tribe murdered notable Chief Pontiac. In retaliation, the other tribes drove the Michigans onto Starved Rock and by 1769, had starved them to death.

Ducoigne continued to lead the Tamaroas. In 1778, he was commended in a letter of praise by French aristocrat and military officer Marquis de La Fayette who had aligned himself under the command of General George Washington and the Continental Army in the American Revolutionary War, for his (Ducoigne's) bravery. The chief knew many notables of the period including Washington, Thomas Jefferson and William Henry Harrison, according to written accounts published in the Du Quoin Evening Call.

In 1800 Chief Ducoigne merged the Kaskaskias, Cahokias and Tamaroas into a new confederacy.

Under his leadership, they fought the Shawnees in prairies east of the Big Muddy two years later and it was bloody as nearly all were killed from both sides. The few who survived were from the Kaskaskia tribe and Ducoigne soon was referred to as Chief of the Kaskaskias.

He died in 1811 and was buried in Kaskaskia. His son, Louis Jefferson Ducoigne, became chief of the tribe in 1811. He helped lay plans for a winter camp where hunting and trapping took place along the Little Muddy and nearby creeks. In the spring, tribe members sold their furs in Kaskaskia and spent the summer in leisure. Located on the main trail from Shawneetown to Kaskaskia, the camp offered shelter and hospitality to all travelers.

Chief Ducoigne and his tribe hunted and camped during the Winter months in the area just southeast of Old Du Quoin.

He was also instrumental in negotiating treaties with the government to secure land for the Chaokias, Tamaroas and Kaskaskia Indian tribes.

Chief Ducoigne lived to be 61-years-old. His daughter Ellen Ducoigne and her husband were granted a 350 acre parcel of ground during the Treaty with the Kaskaskia Indians in 1832. The ground was located near the town that is now Kaskaskia, Illinois.

Sources:

Arnold Wyrick

DuQuoin, Il. KFVS. 2010

Scott Fitzgerald, The Southern Oct 11, 2011 Updated Oct 19, 2012

Rebuttal to above essay by Julia Cronin (2022):

Ducoigne was a traitor to his people, despised by other tribal leaders, and likely an imperialist plant by Indiana governor and future United States president William Henry Harrison, who was then in the midst of a series of Indian removal treaties, some misrepresented, some made with individuals who did not have rights to sign them. Read the original 1803 Kaskaskia treaty - he is the only chief to sign, the only native person to sign with more than an 'X' [Note: This claim is false, or perhaps misleading. Jean Baptiste signed with an 'X' as is apparent on the treaty cited, however his son Louis, who became Chief of the Kaskaskia when Jean Baptiste died in 1811, signed his full name.], and the terms of the treaty are absurd.

He did not "secure lands" for his people. He ceded a parcel of land which constituted about half the area of modern Illinois, from the southern tip to Kankakee in a central strip between Peoria and Champaign. The parcel he sold included Peoria tribal lands which he had no right to cede and which the Peoria were forced to sign over in a separate treaty in 1818.

In exchange for, and I emphasize, *half of Illinois*, including some of its richest farmlands, the Kaskaskia and associated tribes were given 350 acres near a town so muddy and flood prone that it went from being the capitol of Illinois to having a population of 117 in about 80 years (it's now 13 as of 2022). 100 acres of this land, more than 1/4 of all the land reserved for all native inhabitants of *half of Illinois* was reserved for Ducoigne, on which the United States built him fine house under the terms of the treaty. It also provided that a "suitable sum" of all monetary and material payments the treaty guaranteed the tribe would be reserved for the chief and his family. You may notice that the allotment given to Ellen (his only child allowed to stay, and the only one married to a White person) was 350 acres. Yes, the Ducoignes eventually got all 350 acres which were intended for all the people in 4 different Illinois tribes.

Ducoigne was a greedy traitor that sold out his people, gave away Illinois, for a house, a plot of unattractive land, and a bit of money. He is exactly the sort of person that the United States intentionally advanced and held up as a tribal leader for the purpose of treaty making, regardless of whether he was considered one in his own community. Even his dear friend William Henry Harrison said that all other tribal leaders hated Ducoigne for his politics. His is not a happy story, and he is not a native hero.

All original treaties can be found in the national archives. The 1803 Kaskaskia-Vincennes treaty can be found here (https://catalog.archives.gov/id/172679828) but broader context for later incidents related to the tribe and territory require studying other treaties and amendments made in the following years.

For sources, I would refer you to the treaties themselves as well as the "Handbook of the American Indians," Bulletin 30, issued by the Bureau of American Ethnology. William Henry Harrison had some very interesting things to say about Jean Baptiste Ducoigne and his relations with other native people.

THE KASKASKIA TRIBE MOVES TO THE Kaskaskia – Cahokia Trail
February 8, 2021

The Kaskaskia people made up one of the principal tribes in what was known as the Illinois Confederacy, or Illini. At the time of first European contact, the tribes of this confederacy held sway over the present area of southern Wisconsin, northern Illinois and along the west bank of the Mississippi River as far south as the Des Moines River in Iowa. By 1700, however, most of the tribes of the confederacy resided in northern Illinois, chiefly on the Illinois River.

The Kaskaskia Indians name presumable related to the word kāskāskahamwa, meaning 'he scrapes it off by means of a tool.' It is probable that the references to the Illini in the Jesuit Relations of 1670 and 1671, from the reports of Father Allouez, apply to the Kaskaskia on the upper Illinois River, and possibly to some minor tribes or bands connected whose names have not been preserved. Although it has been asserted that earlier visits than that of Marquette in 1673 were made to this people by the whites, there is no satisfactory evidence to justify this conclusion. Their chief village, The Grand Village of the Kaskaskia, is supposed to have been situated about the present site of Utica, LaSalle County, Illinois. Marquette states that at the time of his first visit the village was composed of 74 cabins. He returned again in the spring of 1674 and established the mission of Immaculate Conception at the Grand Village of Kaskaskia. It appears that by this time the village had increased to somewhat more than a hundred cabins. Allouez, who followed as the next missionary, states that when he came to the place in 1677 the village contained 351 cabins, and that while the village formerly consisted of but one nation (tribe), at the time of his visit it was composed of 8 tribes or peoples, the additional ones having come up from the banks of the Mississippi. Although the known Peoria village was some distance away, it may be that at this time this tribe and the Moingwena tribe also resided at the Kaskaskia village. This is implied in an expression by Father Gravier, who speaks of the Mugulasha "forming a village with the Baiougoula as the Pioüaroüa [Peoria] do with the Kaskaskia." This, however, would lead to the supposition, if the statement by Allouez be accepted as correct, that there were other bands or tribes collected here at the time of his mission whose names have not survived. Possibly they may have been bands of the Mascoutin or the Miami.

Grand Kaskaskia was the village of the Illinois which La Salle reached about late December 1679, on his first visit southward from the lakes. He found it unoccupied, however, the inhabitants were on a hunting expedition. The French mission was maintained at this place under Fathers Rasles, Gravier, Binneteau, Pinet, and Marest, until about the close of 1700. At that time the Kaskaskia, influenced by a desire to join the French in Louisiana, decided to separate from their brothers and migrate to the lower Mississippi. Gravier was much opposed to this movement, and although he arrived on the ground too late to prevent their departure. It was also through his influence that they were induced to stop their southern migration at the mouth of what is today the Kaskaskia River, where they made their home, on or near the site of the present town of Kaskaskia in Randolph County, Illinois. their removal west of the Mississippi under the treaty of Oct. 27, 1812.

According to cartographer Thomas Hutchins, in 1764 the Kaskaskia numbered 500, and he gives the number in 1778 as 210 individuals, including 60 warriors. They were then in a village about

3 miles north of the present town of Kaskaskia, but had been denigrated by alcohol and lost much of their culture through relations with Euro-Americans.

As a result of continuous war with their northern neighbors, in particular the Sac and Fox Tribes, by the time of the Revolutionary War the Illini Confederacy, represented now by the Kaskaskia and Peoria, was reduced to a fraction of its former strength and had lost most of its former territories.

The Illini managed to avoid major conflict with the Americans in both the Revolutionary War and the 1st Indian Troubles, which culminated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the 1794 Treaty of Greenville.

General Georges-Henri-Victor Collot visited the Illinois Country in 1796, traveled the Kaskaskia-Cahokia Trail, and wrote about the trail and the Kaskaskia people. In 1800 Chief Jean Baptist's Ducoigne merged the Kaskaskias, Cahokias and Tamaroas into a new confederacy. The major rival over southern Illinois hunting grounds were the Shawnee, who had moved into Illinois from Ohio and Indiana. Under Ducoigne's leadership, the Kaskaskia fought the Shawnees in prairies east of the Big Muddy in 1802, and it was bloody as nearly all were killed from both sides. The few who did survived were from the Kaskaskia tribe. Chief Jean Baptiste Ducoigne died in 1811, and was buried in Kaskaskia. His son, Louis Jefferson Ducoigne, became chief of the tribe in 1811. He helped lay plans for a winter camp where hunting and trapping took place along the Little Muddy and nearby creeks. In the spring, tribe members sold their furs in Kaskaskia and spent the summer in leisure. Located on the main trail from Shawneetown to Kaskaskia, the camp offered shelter and hospitality to all travelers.

The Kaskaskia participated in the treaties of Greenville, Ohio, Aug. 3, 1795, and Ft. Wayne, Indiana, June 7, 1803, made by the tribes of the old Northwest Territory, with Anthony Wayne and William H. Harrison. In the treaty of Aug. 13, 1803, at Vincennes, Indiana, it is stated that the tribe constitutes "the remains of and rightfully represents all the tribes of the Illini Indians, originally called the Kaskaskia, Mitchigamia, Cahokia, and Tamaroa." By these treaties the Kaskaskia ceded all of their remaining lands in Illinois to the United States in return for protection and patronage. They were taken under the immediate care and patronage of the United States and promised protection against the other Indians. During the 2nd Indian Trouble associated with the War of 1812, most of the Kaskaskia moved west of the Mississippi to Missouri and Arkansas where they maintained their close relationship with the Peoria. All of the Illini tribes were now part of the Kaskaskia or Peoria.

On October 27, 1832, the Kaskaskia and Peoria signed a treaty, 7 Stat. 403, which gave formal recognition to their union and granted them 150 sections on the Osage Reserve in Kansas. By this treaty made at Castor Hill, Mo., Oct. 27, 1832, the Illini ceded to the United States all their lands east of the Mississippi except a single tract reserved to Ellen Ducoigne, the daughter of their late chief, Jean Baptiste Ducoigne. By the treaty of Washington, May 30, 1854, the consolidated tribes ceded to the United States part of the tracts held by them under the treaty of 1832, above mentioned, and under the treaty with the Piankashaw and Wea, Oct. 29, 1832, reserving 160 acres for each member of the tribe and 10, sections as a tribal reserve. By the treaty of Washington, Feb. 23, 1867, land was assigned them in the north east corner of Indian

Territory, today's Kansas. The consolidated bands, including also the remnant of the Wea and Piankashaw and now known officially as Consolidated Peoria Tribe, numbered only 195 by 1905.

Sources: Hodge, Frederick Webb, Compiler. The Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico. Bureau of American Ethnology, Government Printing Office. 1906.
Patton, Dennis. Kaskaskia-Cahokia Trail, 2018.